

Approved
by EEB

9/13/02

INTERNET AND ELECTRONIC MESSAGE SYSTEMS (E-MAIL) USE

Purpose Statement: To establish the Department's position on electronic privacy and the proper use of Internet access and E-mail systems. The policy includes, but is not limited to, electronic mail systems, voice mail systems and other electronic media that generate, store, transmit, and display correspondence or information for internal and external business communication purposes. This policy applies to all General Administration employees.

Action: Revision – Modifying users responsibilities

Date Approved:

Approved By: R. D. Fukai

See Also: RCW 42.52.160; WAC 292-110-010, Safe and Secure Workplace Policy; Sexual Harassment Policy

Risk Statement

Improper or illegal use of General Administration (GA) technology resources poses serious risk and liability to both the department and the individual employee. These risks include, but are not limited to:

- Loss of public trust in GA and/or State Government.
- Financial loss
- Illegal or unethical activity
- Loss of network or operational integrity

1. The Internet and Electronic Message System (E-Mail and Voice Mail) Shall Only be Used for Official State Business, except as allowed for within this policy.

2. The Responsibility and Accountability for Appropriate Use of the Internet and Electronic Message System Lies with the Individual Employee. Supervisors are responsible for ensuring the employee is made aware of and understands the policy.

- Employees are responsible for protecting their login ID and password and to log off their computer whenever it will be unattended for any extended period. Individuals should never let others use their ID and password.
- GA E-mail and electronic files are not document archive systems. Employees are responsible for following Agency and State document retention and archive procedures.
- Employees may not set up personal Internet E-mail accounts (Ex. Hotmail, Yahoo, etc.) directly on their PC or laptop.

3. Prohibited Uses

As consistent with use of any state resources the following uses are never allowed (not even on a de minimis basis):

- **PRIVATE GAIN:** Any use for the purpose of personal benefit such as conducting an outside business or private employment. (Examples include entering a commercial contest.)
- **OUTSIDE BENEFIT:** Any use for the purpose of supporting, promoting the interests of, or soliciting for an outside organization or group, including, but not limited to: a private business, a non-profit organization, or a political party (unless provided for by law or authorized by an agency head or designee).
- **CAMPAIGNING:** Any use for assisting a campaign for election of a person to an office or for the promotion of or opposition to a ballot proposition.
(Such use of state resources is prohibited by RCW 42.52.180, subject to the exceptions in RCW 42.52.180(2).)
- **LOBBYING:** Any use for participating in or assisting in an effort to lobby the state legislature, or a state agency head.
(Such a use of state resources is prohibited by RCW 42.17.190, subject to the exceptions in RCW 42.17.190(3).)
- **ILLEGAL ACTS:** Any use related to conduct that is prohibited by a federal or state law or rule, or GA policy. (Examples include compliance with privacy, copyright and trademark laws.)
- **UNETHICAL ACTS:** Any use for the purpose of discriminating against or harassing another person. (Avoid racist and pornographic media.)

4. Allowed Uses

De Minimis Personal use of the Internet and Electronic Message System will be Allowed, except as noted under section 3 above. De minimis use means that the use meets all of the following tests:

- There is **little or no cost** to the state.
- Any use is **brief** in duration, occurs **infrequently**, and is the most effective use of time or resources. (Avoid gambling, games and other activities that can exceed brief usage.)
- The use **does not interfere with** the performance of the officer's or employee's official **duties**.
- The use **does not disrupt** or distract from the conduct of **state business** due to volume or frequency.
- The use **does not disrupt** other **state employees** and does not obligate them to make a personal use of state resources. (Examples to avoid include mass personal Emails and chain letters.)
- The use **does not compromise** the **security or integrity** of state property, information, or software.

De minimis use of agency technology resources does not include services that utilize excessive agency bandwidth, e.g., large file downloading or sending out large files unless authorized for business purposes. (Examples include viewing video or listening to Internet radio broadcasts.)

Below are some examples of activities currently allowed on a de minimis basis:

- To check on your children or childcare arrangements via E-mail.
- To notify GA employees of Director approved charitable activities.
- To notify GA employees of retirement events.
- To check on personal Deferred Compensation account activity.
- To check on medical insurance information on the Health Care Authority website.

Limited Union (if an exclusive representation) use solely for contract negotiation and contract administration is allowed as part of state business (not the de minimis limit).

Examples include:

- To schedule grievance and Labor/Management meetings
- To transmit and approve Labor/Management minutes

5. The Transmission of Any Material in Violation of Any U. S. or Washington State Laws or Regulations is Prohibited**6. The Department of General Administration has the Right to Actively Monitor Usage**

The Department has the right to actively monitor system usage on a periodic basis to determine compliance with this policy and Ethics Board rulings. Electronic messages are reproducible, are not private, and may be subject to disclosure under public disclosure laws. Violations could result in corrective or disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

7. Assistant Directors Shall Be Responsible For Compliance

Assistant Directors are responsible for the management of, and compliance with, this policy. Employees should address any questions about appropriate Internet use to either their supervisor, Assistant Director, GA's Internal Auditor, or the Employee Services Manager.